

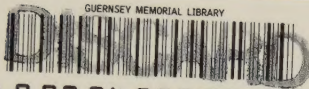
GOD AND  
*MY FATHER*



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CLARENCE DAY

1881



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Day: God and my father

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# **GOD AND MY FATHER**

ALSO BY  
*CLARENCE DAY*



THIS SIMIAN WORLD  
THE CROW'S NEST  
THOUGHTS WITHOUT WORDS  
GOD AND MY FATHER  
IN THE GREEN MOUNTAIN COUNTRY  
SCENES FROM THE MESOZOIC

GOD AND  
*MY FATHER*

*by*

CLARENCE DAY



*New York & London*

ALFRED·A·KNOPF

1935

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JOHN V. BROWN  
1931  
V. B. BROWN

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

C O N T E N T S

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|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| INTRODUCTION: GOD AND MY FATHER | ix |
| I MY FATHER'S RELIGION          | 3  |
| II MY FATHER AND HIS PASTORS    | 17 |
| III MY MOTHER'S DISCOVERY       | 37 |
| IV MY FATHER'S DARK HOUR        | 52 |
| V MY FATHER ENTERS THE CHURCH   | 67 |



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## GOD AND MY FATHER

In my boyhood, I never had a doubt that the beliefs they taught me were true. The difficulty was to live up to them, and to love God. Most of the time I was too busy to think of such things: but then a problem of conduct would face me, or a duty I had forgotten, or my own private feelings at night after saying my prayers, and at such times religion would confront me like a Sphinx in the landscape. I would stand before it like a hypnotized bird before some great ageless serpent, unable to think of or feel any way of escape.

I believed in the Bible. Creation, to me, meant a Creator. And since there was some one so great and powerful that He had created us all, I felt I had better learn His wishes. They were supposed to be good. I wanted to live in harmony with Him—no battle of wills. Yet I also wished greatly to get away and live as I liked.

If I could have been sure that the Creator was my ally or friend, that would have been a great comfort, in those days. It would have not only saved me from worry, it would have set me free to go about my business with confidence, both in Him and myself. Or if I could have surrendered myself to His rather bleak guidance, that again might have been a relief to me. But—I couldn't do it. I didn't quite trust Him or love Him enough to do that.

I thought of God as a strangely emotional being. He was powerful; He was forgiving yet obdurate, full of wrath and affection. Both His wrath and affection were fitful, they came and they went, and I couldn't count on either to continue: although they both always did. In short God was much such a being as my father himself.

What was the relation between them, I wondered—these two puzzling deities?

# GOD AND MY FATHER



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## I

### MY FATHER'S RELIGION

My father's ideas of religion seemed straightforward and simple. He had noticed when he was a boy that there were buildings called churches; he had accepted them as a natural part of the surroundings in which he had been born. He would never have invented such things himself. Nevertheless they were here. As he grew up he regarded them as unquestioningly as he did banks. They were substantial old structures, they were respectable, decent, and venerable. They were frequented by the right sort of people. Well, that was enough.

On the other hand he never allowed churches—or banks—to dictate to him. He gave each the respect that was due to it from his point of view; but he also expected from each of them the respect he felt due to him.

As to creeds, he knew nothing about them, and

cared nothing either; yet he seemed to know which sect he belonged with. It had to be a sect with the minimum of nonsense about it; no total immersion, no exhorters, no holy confession. He would have been a Unitarian, naturally, if he'd lived in Boston. Since he was a respectable New Yorker, he belonged in the Episcopal Church.

As to living a spiritual life, he never tackled that problem. Some men who accept spiritual beliefs try to live up to them daily: other men, who reject such beliefs, try sometimes to smash them. My father would have disagreed with both kinds entirely. He took a more distant attitude. It disgusted him when atheists attacked religion: he thought they were vulgar. But he also objected to have religion make demands upon him—he felt that religion too was vulgar, when it tried to stir up men's feelings. It had its own proper field of activity, and it was all right there, of course; but there was one place religion should let alone, and that was a man's soul. He especially loathed any talk of walking hand in hand with his Saviour. And if he had ever found the Holy Ghost trying to soften his heart, he would have regarded Its

behavior as distinctly uncalled for; even ungentlemanly.

The only religious leader or prophet I can think of who might have suited my father was Confucius—though even Confucius would have struck him as addled. Confucius was an advocate of peace, and of finding the path; and he enjoined the Golden Rule on his followers long before Christ. My father would not have been his follower in any of these. Finding “the path”? Not even Confucius could have made him see what that meant. He was too busy for that, too hot-tempered for peace, and the Golden Rule he regarded as claptrap; how could things work both ways? Whatever he did unto others he was sure was all right, but that didn't mean that he would have allowed them to do the same things to him. He saw other men as disorderly troops, and himself as a general; and the Golden Rule was plainly too mushy to apply in such circumstances. He disciplined himself quite as firmly as he tried to discipline others, but it wasn't necessarily by any means the same kind of discipline. There was one saying of Confucius', however, with which he

would have agreed: "Respect spiritual beings—if there are any—but keep aloof from them." My father would have regarded that principle as thoroughly sound.

When Confucius was asked about the rule to return good for evil, he said: "What then will you return for good? No: return good for good; for evil, return justice." If my father had been asked to return good for evil he would have been even more pithy—his response would have consisted of a hearty and full-throated "Bah!"

If he had been let alone, he would have brought up his sons in this spirit. But my mother's feelings and teachings were different, and this complicated things for us. Like my father, she had accepted religion without any doubtings, but she had accepted more of it. She was far more devout. And she loved best the kind of faith that comforted her and sweetened her thoughts. My father didn't object to this at all—it was all right enough—for a woman: but it led to her giving us instructions that battled with his.

They both insisted strongly, for example, on our going to church, but they didn't agree in their

reasons. It was the right thing to do, Father said. "But why do we have to go, Father?" "Because I wish to bring you up properly. Men who neglect going to church are a lazy, disreputable lot." A few might be good fellows, he would admit, but they were the exceptions. As a rule, non-churchgoers were not solid, respectable citizens. All respectable citizens owed it to themselves to attend.

My mother put it differently to us. She said we owed it to God. Church to her was a place where you worshiped, and learned to be good. My father never dreamed of attending for any such reason. In his moral instructions to us he never once mentioned God. What he dwelt on was integrity. My mother once wrote in my plush-covered autograph album, "Fear God and keep His commandments;" but the motto that Father had written on the preceding page, over his bolder signature, was: "Do your duty and fear no one." And nobody could tell him his duty—he knew it without that, it seemed. It wasn't written down in any book, certainly not in the Bible, but it was a perfectly definite and indisputable thing nevertheless. It was a code, a tradition. It was to be up-

right and fearless and honorable, and to brush your clothes properly; and in general always to do the right thing in every department of life. The right thing to do for religion was to go to some good church on Sundays.

When Father went to church and sat in his pew, he felt he was doing enough. Any further spiritual work ought to be done by the clergy.

When hymns were sung he sometimes joined in mechanically, for the mere sake of singing; but usually he stood as silent as an eagle among canaries and doves, leaving others to abase themselves in sentiments that he didn't share. The hymns inculcated meekness and submission, and dependence on God; but Father was quick to resent an injury, and he had no meekness in him.

“Jesus, lover of my soul,  
 Let me to thy bosom fly,  
 While the nearer waters roll,  
 While the tempest still is nigh.”

How could Father sing that? He had no desire to fly to that bosom.

“Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,

## MY FATHER'S RELIGION

Till the storm of life be past;  
Safe into the haven guide,  
Oh receive my soul at last . . .  
All my trust on thee is stayed;  
All my help from thee I bring;  
Cover my defenseless head  
With the shadow of thy wing."

But Father's head was far from defenseless, and he would have scorned to hide, or ask shelter. As he stood there, looking critically about him, high-spirited, resolute, I could imagine him marching with that same independence through space—a tiny speck masterfully dealing with death and infinity.

When our rector talked of imitating the saints, it seemed drivel to Father. What! imitate persons who gave their whole lives to religion, and took only a perfunctory interest in the affairs of this world? Father regarded himself as a more all-round man than the saints. They had neglected nine-tenths of their duties from his point of view—they had no business connections, no families, they hadn't even paid taxes. In a word, saints were freaks. If a freak spent an abnormal amount of

time being religious, what of it?

The clergy were a kind of freaks also. A queer lot. Father liked Bishop Greer and a few others, but he hadn't much respect for the rest of them. He thought of most clergymen as any busy man of action thinks of philosophers, or of those scholars who discuss the fourth dimension, which is beyond human knowing. He regarded the self-alleged intimacy of our rector with that fourth dimension most sceptically. He himself neither was nor wished to be intimate with a thing of that sort. But this didn't mean that he doubted the existence of God. On the contrary, God and Father had somehow contrived to achieve a serene and harmonious relation that the clergy themselves might have envied.

How did Father think God felt towards my mother? Why, about the way he did. God probably knew she had faults, but He saw she was lovely and good; and—in spite of some mistaken ideas that she had about money—He doubtless looked on her most affectionately. Father didn't expect God to regard *him* affectionately—they stood up man to man—but naturally God loved my mother,

as everyone must. At the gate of Heaven, if there was any misunderstanding about his own ticket, Father counted on Mother to get him in. That was her affair.

This idea runs far back, or down, into old human thoughts. "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife." (First Corinthians, vii, 14.) Medical missionaries report that today, in some primitive tribes, a healthy woman will propose to swallow medicine in behalf of her sick husband. This plan seems to her husband quite reasonable. It seemed so—in religion—to Father.

As to his mental picture of God, I suppose that Father was vague, but in a general way he seemed an envisage a God in his own image. A God who had small use for emotionalism and who prized strength and dignity. A God who probably found the clergy as hard to bear as did Father himself. In short Father and God, as I said, usually saw eye to eye. They seldom met, or even sought a meeting, their spheres were so different; but they had perfect confidence in each other—at least at most moments. The only exceptions were when God seemed to be neglecting his job—Father's

confidence in Him was then withdrawn, instantly. But I'll come to this later.

As to the nature of God's sphere, namely Heaven, compared to Father's, the earth, Heaven wasn't nearly so solid and substantial. Father had all the best of it. Life here on earth was trying, but it shouldn't be—it was all right intrinsically—he felt it was only people's damned carelessness that upset things so much. Heaven on the other hand had a more serious and fundamental defect: the whole place was thin and peculiar. It didn't inspire much confidence. Father saw glumly that the time would come when he'd have to go there, but he didn't at all relish the prospect. He clung to his own battered realm.

Yet its faults and stupidities weighed on his spirit at times: all the chuckle-headed talk and rascality in business and politics. He was always getting indignant about them, and demanding that they be stamped out; and when he saw them continually spreading everywhere, it was maddening. Nature too, though in general sound and wholesome, had a treacherous streak. He hated and resented decay, and failing powers. He hated

to see little children or animals suffer. His own aches and pains were an outrage; he faced them with anger. And aside from these treacheries, there was a spirit of rebellion in things. He would come in from a walk over his fields—which to me had seemed pleasant—oppressed by the balky disposition both of his fields and his farmer. He would get up from an inspection of his account books with the same irritation: there were always some bonds in his box that hadn't behaved as they should. And twice a day, regularly, he would have a collision, or bout, with the newspaper: it was hard to see why God had made so many damned fools and democrats.

I would try to persuade him sometimes—in my argumentative years—that it would be better for him to accept the world as it was and adapt himself to it, since he could scarcely expect to make the planet over, and change the whole earth single-handed. Father listened to this talk with suspicion, as to an *advocatus diaboli*. If he ever was tempted to give in, it was only in his weak moments; a minute later he was again on the war-path, like a materialistic Don Quixote.

There was one kind of depression that afflicted Mother which Father was free from: he never once had any moments of feeling "unworthy". This was a puzzle to Mother, and it made her look at Father with a mixture of awe and annoyance. Other people went to church to be made better, she told him. Why didn't he? He replied in astonishment that he had no need to be better—he was all right as he was. Mother couldn't get over his taking this stand, but she never could get him to see what the matter was with it. It wasn't at all easy for Father to see that he had any faults; and if he did, it didn't even occur to him to ask God to forgive them. He forgave them himself. In his moments of prayer, when he and God tried to commune with each other, it wasn't his own shortcomings that were brought on the carpet, but God's.

He expected a good deal of God, apparently. Not that he wanted God's help, of course; or far less His guidance. No, but it seemed that God—like the rest of us—spoiled Father's plans. He, Father, was always trying to bring this or that good thing to pass, only to find that there were ob-

stacles in the way. These of course roused his wrath. He would call God's attention to such things. They should not have been there. He didn't actually accuse God of gross inefficiency, but when he prayed his tone was loud and angry, like that of a dissatisfied guest in a carelessly managed hotel.

I never saw Father kneel in supplication on such occasions. On the contrary he usually talked with God lying in bed. My room was just above Father's, and he could easily be heard through the floor. On those rare nights when he failed to sleep well, the sound of damns would float up—at first deep and tragic and low, then more loud and exasperated. Fragments of thoughts and strong feelings came next, or meditations on current bothers. At the peak of these, God would be summoned. I would hear him call "Oh God?" over and over, with a rising inflection, as though he were demanding that God should present himself instantly, and sit in the fat green chair in the corner, and be duly admonished. Then when Father seemed to feel that God was listening, he would begin to expostulate. He would moan in a

discouraged but strong voice: "Oh God, it's too much. Amen. . . I say it's too damned much. . . No, no, I can't stand it. Amen." After a pause, if he didn't feel better, he would seem to suspect that God might be trying to sneak back to Heaven without doing anything, and I would hear him shout warningly: "Oh God! I *won't* stand it! Amen. Oh damnation! A-a-men." Sometimes he would ferociously bark a few extra Amens, and then, soothed and satisfied, peacefully go back to sleep. . . And one night in the country, when the caretaker of our house in town telephoned to Father that the rain was pouring in through a hole in the roof, I heard so much noise that I got out of bed and looked over the banisters, and saw Father standing alone in the hall, shaking his fist at the ceiling, and shouting in hot indignation to Heaven, "What next?"

But Father was patient with God after all. If he didn't forgive, he forgot. His wrath didn't last—he had other things to think of—and he was genial at heart. The very next Sunday after an outburst he would be back in church. Not perhaps as a worshiper or a devotee, but at least as a patron.

## MY FATHER AND HIS PASTORS

A man who accepts a religion without being religious lets himself in for more hardships than one would suppose. My father persisted most manfully in going to church; and he usually entered its portals at peace with the world and settled himself down contentedly in his end seat: but somehow before very long his expression would darken, as his hopes of hearing a sensible service little by little were dashed; and he came out in an inflamed state of mind that could not have been good for him.

The Episcopal service in general he didn't criticize; it was stately and quiet; but the sermon, being different every Sunday, was a very bad gamble. And once in awhile there would be an impromptu prayer that he would take great offense at. Sometimes he disliked its subject or

sentiments—if he chanced to be listening. Sometimes he decided it was too long, or its tone too lugubrious. I remember seeing him so restive during a prayer of that kind, that—although the entire congregation was kneeling in reverence—he suddenly gave a loud snort, sat up straight in his pew, and glared at the minister's back as though planning to kick it.

I glanced over at Mother. She had been sailing along devoutly, as best she could, in the full tide of prayer, with the lovely rapt look that would come at such times on her face; but she had also begun to watch Father out of one eye—for whenever a prayer was longer than usual she feared its effect on him—and now here he was sitting up and she had to stop praying and turn away from God to this obstinate, obstinate man. "Put your head down," she whispered fiercely; and then, when he wouldn't, she felt so furious at him, and so impotent, and so guilty for having such feelings, and so torn between her yearning to sink back again into the sweet peace of prayer and her hot determination to make the bad boy in Father behave, that she sent him a look like a flash of lightning,

shooting out through quick tears; indignant to the very roots of her red hair, and as hurt as a child. This sank into him. He never would at any time kneel in church—she had given up struggling for that—but at last with a deep angry growl he once more bent stiffly down.

Toward the latter part of his life Father found a minister whose sermons he liked. This was the Reverend Mr. Henshaw of Rye, where we lived in the summer. Mr. Henshaw wasn't "one of these pious fellows," Father said, with approval—though why piety was so unsuited to the clergy he never explained. And some years before this, one summer on the Hudson near Tarrytown, there was a Mr. Wenke, an earnest young cleric, who also found favor. But this was mostly because one of the vestry, old Mr. John Rutland, was very strict with Mr. Wenke about the length of his sermons. Mr. Rutland had got it into his head that all sermons should end at twelve, sharp; and if he saw Mr. Wenke being carried away by his own eloquence, he would take out his watch and stare ominously, first at him, then at it. Pretty soon Mr. Wenke's roving eye would be caught and held by

this sight. He would falter or sometimes almost choke in the midst of his flow, then lamely end his remarks, and get out of the pulpit.

In the city at this same later period Father went to St. Bartholomew's, and there too the various clergymen suited him, though not quite so well. He liked St. Bartholomew's. The church itself was comfortable, and the congregation were all the right sort. There was Mr. Edward J. Stuyvesant, who was president of three different coal-mines, and Admiral Prentice who had commanded the Fleet, and old Mr. Johns of the *Times*; and bank directors and doctors and judges—solid men of affairs. The place was like a good club. And the sermon was like a strong editorial in a conservative newspaper. It did not nag at Father, it attacked the opposition instead; it gave all wrong-headed persons a sound trouncing, just the way Father would have.

Mother didn't enjoy these attacks. Denunciations upset her. She took almost all denouncing personally, as directed at her, and it made her feel so full of faults that she trembled inside, though she looked straight back up at the preacher,

round-eyed and scared but defiant. She preferred something healing, and restful; some dear old tale from the Bible. But denunciations satisfied Father. He liked something vigorous. And in general he instinctively took to the Established Church pattern—a church managed like a department of a gentleman's Government. He liked such a church's strong tory flavor, and its recognition of castes. He liked its deference to soundable persons who knew how to run things, and its confidence in their integrity and right point of view. In effect, it put such men on their honor, without foolishly saying so. No other approach would have found a way into their hearts.

But nothing is perfect. After Father had made himself at home in this reliable temple, he discovered too late that even here a man wasn't safe. The rector began talking about the need for what he called a New Edifice. He said the church had a leak in the roof, and the neighborhood was changing to business, and that they had received a good offer for the property and had better move elsewhere. This gave Father an unsettled feeling. He wished to stay put. But the rector kept stirring

things up until he at last got his way.

Committees were appointed, and active teams of workers were organized, who began to collect large subscriptions from every parishioner. Father paid no attention to all this. It was no plan of his. If they insisted on having better quarters, he would try to enjoy them, but aside from this effort the rest of it was not his affair. It was only when he was made to see that he too would have to subscribe, that Father became roused and startled. This had never occurred to him. He said he might have known it was just a damn scheme to get money.

He was still more upset when Mother told him what sum was expected of him. He had imagined that they would want fifty dollars, or even a hundred, and that was enough to depress him. But she said that since he had bought a good pew they would expect him to give several thousand. This was like an earthquake. Father in fact took it as some wild catbushen of nature, some intended violent destruction of an honest citizen's purse. After roaring out that the mother and his Christian workers could all go to hell, he bellowed

himself every evening in his cyclone cellar—the library—and declared he wouldn't see any callers. This lasted a week. Then when he had cooled down a little, Mother had a long talk with him, and told him who were on the committee—some men whom he liked. She said he would really have to subscribe. He'd at least have to see them.

He waited, fretful and uneasy, for the attack to begin. One night when Mother was sitting in her room, there were sounds of talk in the library. She hurried down the passageway, clutching her needle and mending, and listened at the door. Father was doing all the talking, it seemed. He was stating his sentiments in his usual round tones, strong and full. He got more and more shouty. Mother began to fear the committee mightn't like being scolded. But when she opened the door on a crack and peeked in, there was no one in there but Father. He was in his easy-chair, talking away, with his face all puckered up, and he was thumping his hand with a hammer-like beat on his newspaper. "In ordinary circumstances," he was saying to the imaginary committeemen, "in ordinary circumstances I should have expected

to subscribe to this project. But during the past few years my investments" (thump, thump, on the newspaper) "have shown me heavy losses." Here he thought of the New Haven Railroad and groaned. "*Damned* heavy losses!" he roared, and flung the paper aside. "Who the devil's that? Oh, it's you, Vinnie. Come in, dear Vinnie. I'm lonely."

I don't recall how much he gave in the end, but I think it was a thousand dollars. The reason Mother thought that he would probably have to give more, was that our pew was way up in front; it was—so to speak—in a fine section. All our neighbors were prominent. There may have been plenty of ordinary Christians in other parts of the building, but I did not see them. Furthermore this pew, though a small one, had cost Father five thousand dollars, and parishioners were being asked to give as much as the cost of their pews. Father had hated to invest all that money in a mere place to sit, but he could sell out again some day, and meanwhile he had a good pew. He rented the one in Rye for a hundred and twenty dollars a year, but a family that wanted a good pew at

St. Bartholomew's in those old days used to buy it. They went to the sexton or somebody, and told him what size and so forth, and after awhile he would negotiate a purchase for them from some other parishioner. Pews were like seats on the stock exchange. Nobody speculated in pews, of course, and they rarely changed hands; but they went up and down in price, naturally, as the demand rose or fell; and after Father had bought his—most unwillingly—from old Mr. Baggs, he used to ask Mother periodically for the current quotation. Mother disliked to get this. It obliged her to ask the sexton, who was dignified, and who didn't like to quote pews; and another objection was that after Father bought they went down in value. When she came home with the news that the last sale had been for thirty-two hundred, Father said she had led him into this against his own better judgment, and now the bottom was dropping out of the market and he never would get his money back. "Old Baggs, *he* knew. He was a shrewd one," he declared. "Egad, yes! He knew when to sell." And he swore that if that damned pew ever went up again he would unload it on

somebody.

When the church moved away from its old quarters, Father wouldn't go with them. After having had to help build a New Edifice which he had not wanted, he felt he'd had enough of such experiences and needed a rest; and he stopped going to church altogether, except in the country.

All during my childhood, before our St. Bartholomew period started, we went to a more home-like church that was less rich and fashionable. It was squeezed in between some old houses on Fifth Avenue near Tyson's Market, and it had a choir of men and boys in surplices, who sang mellow chants, and a narrow but high vaulted roof that rang with the organ music, and stained glass with deep colors; and best of all I thought was Mr. Dryden, the sexton, who had extraordinarily long pointed whiskers that waved in the air when he was in a hurry—a pair of thin curly streamers. He nearly always was in a hurry, and I liked attending this church.

Nowadays there is an office-building there, as tall as a dozen such churches, the air is full of gasoline and the avenue is shut in and darkened;

## MY FATHER AND HIS PASTORS

and the powerful traffic throbs by with a tense, roaring hum. But when I was a boy the low houses were set back from broad sidewalks, there was fresh air and plenty of room, and window boxes of flowers; and a bit of green here and there, trees or ivy; and a wide field of sky.

I suppose that the reason we went to this church that I speak of, the Church of the Peace Everlasting, was because it stood near our home. Its name, at least so far as Father was concerned, was a mockery, for he suffered most cruelly there. Yet he went there for years. Yes, and he kept right on going without any question of changing. He disliked change more than he did suffering. In the end he burst out and bought his liberty along with Mr. Baggs' pew—so the latter was cheap after all: but he lost the best years of his life at the Peace Everlasting.

The clergyman there was the Reverend Dr. Owen Lloyd Garden. He was a plump, bustling man, very good-hearted and pleasant; though in spite of his good-heartedness and kindness I never felt at ease with him. He never seemed to speak to me personally, but to a thing called My

Child. He was more at home speaking to a large audience than to a small boy, however. He had warm and sympathetic feelings toward people en masse. The congregation responded to this quality in him, and liked him; and he not only kept the pews filled but he sometimes attracted such crowds that Mr. Dryden would scurry by with his whiskers flying straight out behind him, putting chairs in the aisle.

Dr. Garden had come over to New York from England, but by descent he was Welsh. He had a broad red face, thick black hair, and a square blue-black beard. His robes were red, black and white. His strong English accent was a point in his favor, in an Episcopal church; it seemed to go well with the service. But owing we understood to his Welsh descent he was very emotional, and he used to plead with us at times in his sermons, in a sort of high mellow howl. My father disliked this. In the first place he heartily detested having anyone plead with him; in the second place Dr. Garden seldom could plead without crying. It wasn't put on at all; he was deeply moved by his own words. The atmosphere became tense and still

when he leaned from his pulpit, and stretched out his arms yearningly to us, and sobbed, "Oh, my people." The whole church was hushed. At such moments Father would testily stir in his seat. "The damned Welshman, there he goes sniveling again," he would mutter.

This would horrify Mother. From her end of the pew she would signal him that he must stop. If he didn't notice, she would tell my small brothers to pass word along to me that I must make Father keep still. It was like expecting a boy to make the jungle behave. The most I felt up to was to get him to see Mother's signals, and that meant that I had to pull myself together and poke him. This was nervous work. He was a muscular, full-barreled man; there was nothing soft in him to poke; and he had a fiery way even of sitting still. It was like poking a stallion. When he became aware that he was being prodded, by my small, timid finger, he would turn fiercely upon me and I would hastily gesture toward Mother. Mother would whisper, "Clare! You mustn't!" and he would reply, "Bah!"

"Oh, Clare!"

“I know, Vinnie; but I can’t stand that damned —”

“Sh—sh! Oh, hush!”

Another thing he detested was the picture Dr. Garden drew, sometimes, of a business man sitting in his office at the close of his day. Dr. Garden didn’t cry over this, to be sure, but he grew gentle and solemn—he spoke as though he himself were standing at that business-man’s side, like an unseen Presence, a loving Good Influence, evoking the man’s better self. He apparently had only the haziest ideas of a business office, but he drew on his imagination freely to fill in the picture. He would describe how this hard-headed man sat there, surrounded by ledgers, and how after studying them closely and harshly for hours he would chance to look out of his window at the light in God’s sky, and then it would come to him that money and ledgers were dross. Whereat, as the gathering twilight spread over the city, this strange wax-work figure of a business-man would bow his head, and with streaming eyes resolve to devote his life to Far Higher Things.

“Oh damn,” Father would burst out, so ex-

plosively that the man across the aisle jumped, and I would hear old Mrs. Tillotson, in the second pew behind, titter.

Aside from the wild untruth of such pictures of business, from Father's point of view the whole attitude involved was pernicious. Anyone dreamy enough to think of money as "dross" was bound to get himself in hot water; that went without saying; it was a sign both of ignorance of, and of disrespect for, finance. Father had more respect for finance than he had for the church. When he left the financial district behind him to visit the church, he felt as I suppose Moses felt coming down from the mountain. Moses found people blind to his mountain and worshiping a calf idiotically, and Father found Dr. Garden capering around something he called Higher Things. Well, let him caper if he wanted to—that was all he was good for. My father was a more charitable Moses who expected no better. But this flighty parson went further—he wanted Moses to join him! Betray finance for this stuff and nonsense! It was enough to make a man sick.

It was Father's custom to put one dollar in the

contribution plate weekly, no more and no less. When Mr. Gregg brought the plate to our pew, Father would first pass it on to us, and we boys would each thump in a nickel, trying to produce a loud ringing sound, as though it were a quarter; and Mother would quietly slip in her offering in a tight little roll; more than she could afford to give, probably, and saved up God knows how. Then Father would hand the plate back to Mr. Gregg, who would patiently wait, while Father took out and unfolded a crisp new dollar bill, and drew it through his fingers so as to make a little crease in it, lengthwise, and laid it out flat on top of everything else, large or small.

This dollar was apt to become the subject of a debate, going home. Mother felt there were Sundays when such a sum was not enough. It bothered her dreadfully, after a sermon that had described some great need, to see Father, absolutely unmoved, put in only his dollar.

Father's first gun in reply was that a dollar was a good handsome sum, and that it would be better for Mother if she could learn this. He had a great deal to say on this point. His second gun,

which he would then fire off at her with still more enjoyment, was that any money he gave to the church would be wasted—it would be spent by a pack of visionary enthusiasts in some crazy way. “Sending red-flannel weskits and moral pocket-handkerchiefs to the heathen,” he quoted.

But after awhile Mother found a counter-argument which actually beat both of his: she made him feel that it was beneath his own dignity not to put in more, sometimes. Even then he didn't surrender; he compromised instead on this method: before starting for church, he put his usual dollar in his right-hand waist-coat pocket, but in the left-hand pocket he put a new five dollar bill; and he stated that from now on he would make a handsome offer to Garden: let him preach a decent sermon for once and he would give him the five.

This made every sermon a sporting event, in our pew. When Dr. Garden entered the pulpit we boys watched with a thrill, as though he were a race-horse at the barrier, jockeying for a good start. He looked rather fat for a race-horse, but he was impressive and confident, and it was kind of awe-inspiring to see him go down every time

to defeat. He always either robbed himself of the prize in the very first lap by getting off on the wrong foot—a wrong key of some sort—or else in spite of a blameless beginning he would fail later on: he would as it were run clear off the course that Father had in silence marked out for him, and gallop away steadily and unconsciously in some other direction. It gave a boy a sobering sense of the grimness of fate.

“I don’t see what the matter was today,” Mother would declare, going home. “You should have given more than a dollar today, Clare. It was a very nice sermon.” But Father would merely say with a twinkle that Garden ought to get a new barrelful.

The only time I saw Father tested was one Sunday in Lent. It was remarkable enough that he should have been present that Sunday, for the one thing he always gave up in Lent was going to church. Dr. Garden’s flow of grief in that season was more than he could stomach. But on this particular morning, to our surprise, Father went without question. It turned out afterward he didn’t know it was Lent—he had “thought the damn

thing was over." And as luck would have it, Dr. Garden was absent, ill in bed with a cold; and the substitute clergyman who took his place won Father's approval. He was a man who showed no emotions, he was plain and matter of fact, and his subject was the needs of some lumber country in the northwest. He had worked there, he knew the men, knew the business, and he described it in detail. I listened awhile, but there were no bears in it or cowboys; it was mostly business statistics; and I was studying a picture on the wall of an angel who looked like Mr. Gregg—a large, droopy angel with wrinkled garments, only he had no mustache—when my brother George secretly nudged me and pointed at Father. Father was listening closely. We glued our eyes on him. His face was keen and set; he had his arms folded; he was taking in every word. But we couldn't tell whether he liked it. The sermon went on a few minutes; and then, before we thought the man was half-through, he stopped. He had finished.

The organist began playing the offertory. There was a rustling of skirts; a stray cough. Imagine our excitement as we waited for the plate

to come round. It seemed to take Mr. Gregg hours to get up the aisle, he stood so long, stooping and bulgy, at the end of each pew. "He wouldn't even hurry to see a fire-engine," George whispered indignantly. At last he got to the Hamiltons' pew in front of us—and then he stood at ours. We were all watching Father. But he hardly noticed Mr. Gregg, he was thinking about something else, and his thumb and finger slid automatically into his one-dollar pocket.

We let out our breaths and relaxed from the strain, disappointed. But just as we were slumping dejectedly down, Father paused; he put the one-dollar bill back, and decisively took out the five.

We could barely help cheering aloud at that substitute clergyman's triumph. And yet he himself never realized what he had done—he stepped quietly out of the pulpit and went back to obscurity. This man had won a victory that none of his profession had gained but nobody knew it except the Recording Angel and the four little Day boys.

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### III

#### MY MOTHER'S DISCOVERY

In spite of his warlike behavior in our hours of worship, Father seemed to me one of the mainstays and chiefs of the church. On weekdays he was a layman, struggling violently with his environment—his business, his family, his home-life, the cook and the coffee—and in general with the natural heat of his feelings among all these antagonists. But on Sundays, after breakfast was over, and the coffee and its sins had departed, and Father had peacefully finished his morning cigar, he put on his shining high hat and he marched us to church; and there, on the end of our pew, was a silver plate with his name on it; and the organ music was rolling and solemn, and Father was a pillar of God.

I felt sure that he was a very good pillar too, and better than most. Better than Mr. Gregg, for

instance, who was the church treasurer, and who was a devout but slouchy old Christian with an overdressed wife. And as good as Colonel Hamilton—well-groomed, military-looking, patrician—who seemed to a little Episcopalian like me the very essence of Christianity.

But these other pillars were vestrymen, and Father was not. They seemed to “belong” more than he did. Father didn’t happen to want to be a vestryman, but he couldn’t be anyhow. I don’t recall how I became aware of it; but there was an obstacle.

And another thing, there was a mysterious rite called communion, with soft music in it, and a great deal of whispering and murmuring by Dr. Garden; amid which the congregation, a few at a time, left their pews, and crowded irregularly forward and knelt at the altar. Dr. Garden then said something to each of them, and gave each one a drink; a very small drink from a very large goblet of gold. When all of that group had had theirs, they walked back to their seats, and others passed forward and knelt. I could see the soles of their shoes. Colonel Hamilton had his soles

blackened, and they looked trim and elegant; but Mr. Gregg's were almost worn-out, and as stubby as mine.

This rite came after the regular service, it was a separate matter, and less than half of the congregation "stayed for communion." Mr. Gregg always stayed. Colonel Hamilton was more independent—he only stayed when he liked. Mother stayed as regularly as Mr. Gregg did. But Father not once.

There was some tension between Father and Mother about this, I felt; but they didn't discuss it before me. She never asked him to stay. She never even asked if he were going to. It was understood that he wasn't. He walked home ahead with us boys, feeling as lively as we did; and Mother arrived twenty minutes later for our one o'clock Sunday dinner. Once in awhile she was half-an-hour later, and Father said "Damn."

The principal course at our Sunday dinners was a great roast of beef, surrounded by fat roasted potatoes and rich Yorkshire pudding. They were all piping hot, and when Father carved the beef it ran juices. We were not allowed to

play with our toys on Sundays, and we had to wear our best clothes, but that dinner was some compensation. Afterward we read, or took walks. There were no week-ends out of town in those days, and golf was almost unknown to us. Father usually read Hume and Smollett's History of England, with his head nodding more and more over it, and his cigar going out. I think it must have been on one of those long afternoons, that Mother, when she thought I was old enough, explained about Father.

She said nobody could go to communion who had not been confirmed. Everybody was baptized, as a baby, to make him a Christian; that was the first step; but to be a full member of the church, one had to learn the creed and the catechism, and go up to the altar, and promise to do and believe everything that his godfathers had promised for him. And the bishop would then lay his hands on him, so he could go to communion.

She said she hoped I would be confirmed when I was thirteen or fourteen, but it must be of my own free will and choice, for it was a great step to take. Father hadn't taken it yet, she confided.

She didn't say why.

I took Mother's prayer-book upstairs with me and looked up the baptism service, to see what my godfather had committed me to, with his promises. Mr. Currier was my only living godfather. He had gone pretty far. He had renounced the Devil and all his works, on my behalf, and the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and the sinful lusts of the flesh. Mr. Currier was such a good old man he had probably thought nothing of it; but I wondered whether I would ever feel up to "renouncing" all that.

I asked Mother a great many questions about confirmation, and from what she said I saw that I'd have to be confirmed by and by. I couldn't get out of it. It wouldn't be fair to Mr. Currier for me to refuse, and leave him responsible to God for my sins all my life.

I looked over the catechism. It was long. It would be hard to learn all that by heart. I inquired whether Father knew the catechism. But Mother said not to ask questions.

My head at once felt full of questions, such as who Father's godfather was, and how much longer

he'd wait, and whether he didn't ever get cross about Father's delay.

But it made Mother cry when I asked these. She said I would know by and by. She said Father had been very busy and had had to work very hard; and that she hoped he would be confirmed soon, when he had a little more time.

Mother evidently had her heart set on Father's learning the catechism and letting the bishop lay his hands on him; but Father didn't feel like it. And the rest of the story, as I heard it later, was this:

When Mother married Father she had naturally supposed that he was a good churchman. She had asked him what church he belonged to, and he had replied "The Episcopal." But as time went on she found that his association with it was vague.

Father's parents had been so fond of Mother and she had liked them so much, that it hadn't even occurred to her to cross-question them about Father's upbringing. His mother was a saint on earth, sweet and good; everyone loved her. His father was a newspaper publisher; philosophic

and humorous. But it turned out that Grandpa's favorite authors were Voltaire and Shakespeare: he read almost nothing else, but his newspaper; and he had no use for religion. He had been brought up so strictly that he had got his fill of it, and had dismissed the whole subject.

Father had accordingly run about and done as he pleased. It was only through one of his school-boy friends that he happened to go to a Sunday School. This school gave a party of some kind, at which they served cake; it was good cake, and whenever they had it Father went to that Sunday School.

When he grew older and decided that it was the proper thing to go to church sometimes, it seems that he had picked out an Episcopal church for this purpose. Not being a free-thinker, like my grandfather, he had approved of religion. But beyond this he hadn't looked into it. He had seen no necessity.

This rudimentary and semi-automatic approach to the church, as by a kind of molecular attraction, seemed pathetic to Mother. She was maternal, and she was compassionately eager to

help Father in, and make him as good a churchman as anyone. But Father had felt he was already in, and to be confirmed was unnecessary. He didn't understand at all clearly what confirmation was anyhow. He declared it was only some folderol. He refused to be bothered with it. This was the root of all those conversations about whether he'd go to Heaven, when Mother said that to be on the safe side he ought to be confirmed first, and Father said that getting him into Heaven was her affair.

But this wasn't the worst. I don't know when Mother found out the whole truth about Father, but I don't think she knew it when she and I had those first talks. If not, it may have been my asking questions that led her to ask more herself, and thus to stumble on a strange and upsetting discovery.

Still, the discovery would have been almost sure to come some day. It was mere luck it hadn't come sooner. Nobody had purposely hidden Father's story from Mother—least of all poor Father himself. He never kept anything from her. Not that he didn't try to; but he was far too un-

guarded to have any secrets.

I remember Father once had his pocket picked on the street-car, coming home. As an old New Yorker, born and bred, he was ashamed of this incident. He was also provoked; and when he unlocked the front door and came in, he was swearing to himself in loud whispers. Mother was upstairs in her room. She heard Father talking away to himself in the front hall, as he hung up his coat. "Damned rascals! if I ever catch them—." He flung his cane in the rack. "Not a word. I shan't say a word about it," he went on, to himself. He stamped up the stairs, muttering, "Yes, too much talk in this house." "Well, Vinnie," he said to Mother, and sat himself down by the fire, in what he evidently meant to be an impenetrable and innocent silence.

"Clare!" Mother said sharply.

"What is it?"

"Clare! What's the matter with you? What has happened?"

"Damnation!" Father said. "What's happened? How do you know that it's happened? There's entirely too much talk in this house. A

man can't have any privacy in his own home, that's what it comes down to. I had my pocket-book stolen, that's what's happened. Are you satisfied now?"

"Your pocket-book? Oh! Why did you let them?"

"Let them!" said Father. "Good God! They picked my pocket on the street-car, I tell you. I had it when I left the club."

"Oh, Clare dear! How could you! You must be getting old. Did you have the cook's wages in it?"

Father sprang from his chair in a fury and left the room, saying: "I knew you'd ask that. Yes, damn it, I had the cook's wages. I want this prying to stop." And afterwards, when he came down to dinner, he was bursting to tell the whole story—just how a young whipper-snapper had jostled him, and what he had said to the fellow, while a confederate had stolen his money and jumped off the car. He added, with a baffled look at Mother, that he didn't know how she found out things.

"She finds out every damn thing I ever do," I heard him say later, in his bathroom, in honest bewilderment. He usually chose the bathroom at

night for his private communings, although an air-shaft connecting with the other bathrooms carried his words through the house.

A man who was so unselfconscious would have betrayed his religious shortcomings completely and promptly, if he himself had known the facts. Grandpa knew the facts, but they had seemed to him of no importance. So it wasn't until Mother chanced to ask him directly one day what church Father had been baptized at, that Grandpa said Father had never been baptized at all.

I doubt if I can even imagine what a shock this was to Mother. This was in the conventional eighteen-eighties, when women led sheltered lives, and when men in general conformed to religious requirements. Mother must have felt that she could hardly believe her own ears. She had taken it for granted that everyone in a civilized country was baptized as soon as he was born as a matter of course. She had never met or known about any man, woman or child, who had even dreamed of not being baptized. It was simply unheard of. Why, all the poor Indians in Mexico belonged to some church. Even in the wildest lands, anywhere,

there were so many missionaries, that every half-naked savage—with any luck at all—seemed to get baptized. Yet here was her own husband—!

Grandpa explained to her that his idea had been to leave Father free: let the boy grow up and decide all such things for himself. As to Grandma, well, she always spoke of Grandpa as Mr. Day, and she was surprised to hear Mother take on so about this. She said to her gently and patiently, "But Vinnie, dear child, that was the way Mr. Day wished it; and he's generally right."

Mother didn't feel this way at all. She thought Grandpa was wrong about lots of things, and she always told him so to his face. Grandpa liked nothing better. She was young and impulsive and pretty, and very direct, and he used to egg her on by arguing with her in the most outrageous ways he could think of.

But this time there wasn't any argument, so far as I ever heard. Mother couldn't wait; she hurried home to Father with her terrible news, supposing that as soon as he heard it he would be baptized at once. There was some excuse for not being confirmed, since not everyone did it, but no-

body would defy God to the extent of not at least being baptized. She had her second great shock when he flatly refused. He was dressing for dinner at the moment, and he said she must not interrupt him. Although he was surprised and displeased to hear he hadn't been christened, he at once declared that nothing could be done to correct matters now.

Mother cried when she talked with me about it, and couldn't give me his reasons. She didn't seem to think that he had any. He was just being obstinate. But I was sometimes allowed to be present when they debated the matter, and this gave me a picture—of some sort—of his state of mind.

"I simply can't understand why you won't be baptized," Mother said. "Clare dear, tell me, aren't you a Christian?"

"Why, confound it, of course I am a Christian," Father roundly declared. "A damned good Christian too. A lot better Christian than those psalm-singing donkeys at church."

"Oh hush, Clare!" Mother always was terrified when he bordered on blasphemy.

Now to say "hush" to Father was like pouring

kerosene on a fire. I repeatedly saw Mother try to quench his flames in this way, and every such effort only made him blaze higher—far higher. Yet she tried it again the next time. Neither she nor Father seemed to study the other one's nature. They each insisted the other one's nature should work in some way it didn't. I never once saw either of them observe the other in a calm, detached spirit, to see how his or her ego operated, and how to press the right button. Instead they invariably charged at each other full tilt, and learned unwillingly and dimly—if at all—by collisions.

So Mother said "hush" to Father, and the conflagration was on. And Father, being maddened by the kerosene, swore more and more, and declared that there was no need whatever for him to go and get baptized, and that he was quite as good a Christian as Owen Lloyd Garden.

"But if you won't be baptized," Mother wailed, "you aren't a Christian at all."

Father said he would not be baptized, and he would be a Christian. He begged to inform Mother he would be a Christian in his own way.

In her desperation Mother went to Dr. Garden and pledged him to secrecy, and revealed to him the horrible fact that Father had never been baptized. Dr. Garden was greatly astonished, but said he would attend to it. He was still more astonished when he learned that he would not be allowed to.

Mother tried to explain Father's plan of being his own kind of Christian. Dr. Garden was agitated. He didn't seem to know what to make of this. He said it had never been heard of. Not even the Apostles had omitted being baptized, he explained. If Mr. Day was going to set himself above the Holy Apostles—

Mother felt more frightened than ever at this dreadful picture. That would be just like Father, she felt. That was exactly what he would do.

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## IV

### MY FATHER'S DARK HOUR

If we had been living in England, I imagine a rector would have known the right tone to take to get Father's good will. He wouldn't have been weepy, or concerned at all about Father's soul. He would have been firm, but quite casual: "Too bad it wasn't done before, of course; but it will only take a few minutes. Better stop in at the church tomorrow morning, and let me attend to it for you. One can't be eccentric in these things. Bad example to others. A person of your position, Mr. Day—" Father might have been open to an approach of that kind.

But the best that Dr. Garden could do was to supply Mother with texts, and to warn her that Father must be baptized before anything happened. The Bible said absolutely you had to be baptized to be saved. If you died first, why then,

instead of Heaven, you would land in hell-fire. In short this was a serious situation, and Mr. Day must give in.

Even this, if it had been led up to little by little and presented to Father impressively, might possibly have made him uneasy about the risk he was running. But Mother was an impetuous ambassador: she threw it all at him at once. She began gently enough; but she was emotional, which set Father on edge; and then at his first impatient word she fired off all her guns. There was a turmoil of texts from the Bible and imprecations from Father; and Father came out of it convinced that this was some damned scheme of Garden's.

Mother at once began a campaign to break Father down, and many pitched battles were fought whenever she suddenly felt like it. Father never knew when he would find himself in the midst of a conflict. He might be going to the theatre with Mother, cross, but handsome and glowing; or he might be reading Hume and Smollett peacefully, on a warm afternoon; or they might be playing backgammon by the fire on some winter evening. Suddenly Mother would remem-

ber his danger and go at him again, and Father would bellow at baptism, and stamp off to play billiards.

One Sunday he even made a scene on his way out of church. Dr. Garden had preached about men who would not see the light; and after the service was over, and while Father and Mother were moving down the crowded aisles slowly, Mother whispered that she felt sure the sermon had been meant for him. Father snorted at such pulpit impudence. "The damned dissenter!" he said. And the rest of the way down the aisle they had it out, hot and heavy. Father wouldn't lower his voice; and people stared, until Mother felt most embarrassed. "Garden needn't talk to me as though I were a Welsh miner," Father kept saying. "I have never done anything I was ashamed of."

His counter-attacks upon Mother were not all in one tone. He used every possible way to stop her, according to the mood he was in. When he was in a good humor he would tease her about it. Or sometimes he would be grave and dignified, and remind her that he knew best. Again,

he would be stern and peremptory: "That's enough, do you hear?" But Mother couldn't stop. She was troubled. Not only did she have a natural desire to have her own way for once, but Dr. Garden had told her how much God would blame her if she didn't bring Father around. She felt that He was blaming her anyhow for all her own faults; and it just seemed intolerable that an additional sin should be hung round her neck, by Father's inexplicable refusal to go through a short ceremony.

He used every possible way to stop her, I said. But he never used argument. He hadn't the patience to explain clearly what he was thinking. Nevertheless, when he was having a violent eruption, remarks would fly out, like heated rocks from a volcano; and these could be analyzed afterward as a clue to his fires.

His general position seemed to be that he didn't object to baptism. It was all right for savages, for instance. But among civilized people it should come only when one was young. Since it hadn't been attended to in his own case, why, let it go, damn it. It would be ridiculous to baptize him

now. It was far too late to do anything. He wasn't to blame. He would have been perfectly willing to be baptized as a child, if they had done the thing soon enough. Since they hadn't, it was no fault of his, and he didn't intend to be bothered.

It was useless to try to make him see that being baptized was a rite, and that it involved something holy and essential. He said it was a mere technicality. As to obeying the Bible, there were a lot of damn things in the Bible. A man would be in a pretty fix if he gave all he had to the poor. No, a man had to use his common-sense about obeying the Bible. And everything else. If he had any.

He seemed to imagine that if he ever came to be tried, by his God, he could easily establish the fact that his position was sound. In any event, he wasn't going to be led around by the nose by a parson. He didn't blame Mother for being upset; she was only a woman; but even she would come to her senses eventually, and see he was right.

At this point I went to Mother and asked her if she would let me help out. It all seemed so

simple and plain to me, that I was sure I could make Father see it. I was in that stage between infancy and adolescence when children will do strange things. Besides, I wasn't neutral: it always upset me and shook me to see Mother unhappy; and the strong emotional vortex before me at last drew me in. Mother was pleased by my wanting to help her, and said I might try. Perhaps she thought Father's heart would be touched by the plea of his child. Needless to say, he was not touched at all; he was merely disgusted.

I can see him now, ruddy and strong, and a little too stout, in his evening clothes and bulging white shirt-front. He lit his cigar after dinner, blew out a rich cloud of smoke, and took a sip of his coffee. "God bless my soul," he said, heartily, and tasted his cognac. "A—men!" He looked over at me. "It doesn't count unless you say A—men," he said, with a wink.

I didn't smile back. I was worriedly waiting for an opening, and counting my weapons.

I had been reading a little devotional book. I don't recall ever willingly reading a book of that kind before; but this time it was almost a

pleasure, because I wasn't reading it for my own improvement but Father's. The author was a person who wrote in a superior tone, and who seemed to feel bored and condescending when he explained things to groundlings. I immediately planned to use Father as my groundling, if possible, and to talk in such a calm, easy way to him, that he'd feel impressed. This author, for example, declared that baptism was "of course a matter of religious joy to any right-minded Christian." He also said that when we were baptized we were "buried with Christ." He went on to state that "remission of sins" was badly needed by everyone, and "it is absurd to suppose that we can be buried with Christ without receiving remission of sins." Things like that.

I tried, but without any success, to explain all this to Father. I also told him about a man called Nicodemus, who had argued against being baptized; and how he had been sternly refuted, and warned to behave himself.

But Father said he wasn't interested in Thing-a-ma-jig—Nicodemus. And I might have known, myself, that he took small stock in arguments. If

he had ever debated things with me he might easily have won me over; but it didn't interest him, usually, to engage in discussion. He didn't care to marshal his reasons or describe the road he had taken. He preferred to begin by stating his conclusion, and by calling yours nonsense, and to end the debate then and there. There was nothing else to be said.

My picture of him, therefore, was that of a man blind and deaf to the anxious and intelligent warnings of Dr. Garden and me.

I was supposed to be a bright boy. I had a high rank at school. But I was so over-receptive and credulous that in effect I was stupid. I had none of a country boy's cautious approach to ideas. I could swallow ideas by the dozen, and did; good and bad. My mind hadn't any of the seasoning or the toughness of Father's. It was so logical that if it had accepted certain premises it would have marched off a precipice. Or at least it would have marched Father off one.

Father was looking quizzically at me. I went at him again. My next weapon was one that I thought would strike fear to his heart: a text that

I had picked out as being especially strong and conclusive. It had one weak point, it didn't specifically use the word baptism, and I expected Father to pounce on this as an objection; but when he did I planned to rebuke him for picking at trifles, and for being concerned with its wording instead of its spirit. But Father was not a man to niggle at small technicalities, and he instinctively met this attack—like all others—head on. The text was Christ's saying that unless people confessed Him before men, neither would He confess them before His Father in Heaven. When I read this to Father, to my astonishment he was quite unconcerned. He felt that this was the mere empty warning of a meddlesome middleman. Father was going to deal direct with his Maker. Christ wasn't his Maker. Father felt he had just as much right around Heaven as Christ.

In fact, now I think of it, Father was—if there is such a thing—an Old Testament Christian. He permitted the existence of Christ, but disapproved of all His ideas.

But I was in no mood to philosophise over this then. My emotions swept over me, and I became

exalted and ardent. I told Father that although we knew he had always been a good man, still he hadn't taken this step that every Christian must take. If he took it, he would go to Heaven and there be received by the angels. If he didn't, I explained to him that he would be cast into Hell. And I cried, and said there would be "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Instead of being moved to tears by this, and getting right down on his knees, Father sat there, beside the dark book-case, fresh and healthy and solid, breathing out a rich odor of Havana cigar smoke and cognac. Every cell in his body seemed to be robustly resisting destruction. I don't recall now what he said to me, but he didn't say much. He reminded me that I was only a little boy. This seemed to me quite irrelevant. What I wanted to know was, how about those arguments; but he merely smiled at my earnestness. A rather grave smile. Perhaps he was wondering how on earth he had produced such a son. At any rate he showed great forbearance, and sent me up to bed; while he got out the cards from the game-box and played solitaire.

His situation looked pretty black to me, as I lay in bed. I pictured to myself how the rest of us would be standing around, up in Heaven, and how very upset we'd all feel to see Father in Hell.

Yet somehow I felt more excitement than grief, at this scene. I must have been deeply impressed by Father's intrepid firmness. True, he was only too plainly shutting himself out of bliss; and ordinarily I'd have felt a great horror at the thought of a loved one in torment. But suppose Father positively refused to go to Hell when they said to? He seemed so remarkably able to fend for himself, that it would probably just be another of his fights. He and Satan.

I began to cool off as a missionary, and go back to my toys. But Mother of course kept right on. And suddenly it seemed for a moment that she might prevail. She had a bad illness, which depressed and worried Father so much, that when she kept begging and begging him to do this thing for her, and told him how happy it would make her, he said that he would.

But when she was well again, and eager to take him around to the font, he wouldn't go. His

memory seemed to have got very dim. Mother exclaimed that he had solemnly agreed to be baptized, but he said flatly he had no recollection of it.

I don't know what grounds he may have had for taking this stand. He was never a man to justify, or explain, or excuse his own conduct. He didn't refrain out of dignity; he merely didn't examine it. He took himself, his thoughts and his actions, completely for granted, without introspection or analysis. Perhaps in this instance, in her fever, Mother had misunderstood him. Or perhaps his point of view was that he'd have done anything to help her get well, but now that she had happily got well his end was achieved, so how could she fairly expect him to proceed with his sacrifice? All I know is he seemed entirely satisfied with his behavior.

Mother felt very badly, and told him he was breaking her heart. This did not upset him. He probably guessed that underneath her tears there was more exasperation than heart-break. She hated the feeling of impotence he gave her. There seemed to be no way to manage him. She kept telling him that she simply couldn't believe he would

really go back on his Sacred Promise—as she now began calling it. She taunted him with it. She said she had always supposed he was a man of his word. Father was quite unperturbed. Downtown, his lightest word to anybody was binding, of course; but that was in the real world of business. Getting baptized was all poppycock.

But Mother began to feel surer now that she could make Father yield. At least she had got one Sacred Promise out of the obstinate man, and she wouldn't let him do any more forgetting if she could once get another. The more her self-confidence grew, the more her tactics improved. She was quite unconscious, probably, that she had handicapped herself, hitherto, by attacking Father only on religious grounds, where he had no soft spots to strike at. He became more vulnerable at once, when she begged him to do her a favor. They were in love with each other; and he would have done a good deal for Mother—"Anything in reason," he said.

He went into the whole matter as thoroughly as a railroad report. He asked just how wet would a man have to get to be baptized. Would he have to

go to the River Jordan to please Mother, and do the thing properly? If not, then exactly what rigmarole would he have to go through. He said if it wasn't too complicated, perhaps he'd consider it.

Mother showed him the baptismal service in the prayer-book for those of riper years; but Father said that by persons of riper years it must mean those who knew better. It was nothing but a lot of prayers anyhow. That was the clergyman's part of it. What he wanted to know was how much trouble he himself would be put to. But when Mother impatiently answered his questions about this, he was startled. He said the thing was even more impracticable than he had supposed. It wasn't as though he could have an accommodating parson trot around to the house and baptize him quietly some morning, after his coffee and eggs; no, he learned that the performance would have to take place in a church; and, worse, there would have to be others present. A congregation, the book said. Father declared that that ended it. He said he certainly wasn't going around to the Peace Everlasting to be made a fool of in that

way. He said, damn it, he'd be the laughing-stock of all his friends. Mother said, why, his friends would be proud of him for standing up for his Saviour; but Father said he'd never hear the last of it, around at the club.

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V

MY FATHER ENTERS THE CHURCH

The way it ended was simple. Mother's family had lived at one time in a pretty little two-storied house, called "The Cottage," in East Twenty-ninth Street; it had casement windows, set with diamond-shaped panes of leaded glass, and a grass plot in front. On the other side of the street, at Fifth Avenue, stood the church that is now known as the Little Church Around the Corner. The first Dr. Houghton was the rector in those times, and Mother was fond of him. One day Mother heard that a young relative of his, the Reverend Mr. Morley, had taken a far-away parish near what was then Audubon Park, a mile or two north of where in later years they erected Grant's Tomb. This part of the city was so thinly settled that it was like a remote country suburb. There were dirt roads and lanes instead of streets;

and thick, quiet old woods. Mother suddenly got the idea that perhaps this would suit Father, since he seemed bent on "confessing God before men" only where no one was looking. Besides, Mother knew young Mr. Morley, and she felt that here was some one she could go to with her curious problem. She asked him to come down and see her. He was sympathetic. He agreed to make everything as easy for Father as possible.

I don't know just why it was, but somehow that was all there was to it. Father still got in a very bad humor whenever the subject was mentioned; but at least Mother wasn't, any longer, asking the impossible of him. It was thoroughly distasteful and he hated it, but he supposed he could go through it sometime. Perhaps he even got to the point of wishing to get the thing over with.

So the day came on which Father had agreed he would enter the church. The only person who had to be reminded of it was Father himself. I remember excitedly looking out of the window at breakfast, and seeing a hired brougham from Ryerson & Brown's in the street. The coachman had on a blue coat with a double row of bright

buttons, and on his legs were faded green trousers from some other man's livery. He was looking up at our front door. His horse was as weather-beaten as the horse on the plains of Siberia, in the picture in my Geography; and he too seemed to be looking up at our house and wondering what would come out of it.

I stood out on our front stoop staring down at them, and listening to the sounds in our hallway. Father had come down to breakfast in a good temper that morning, and the bacon and eggs had suited him for once, and the coffee too had found favor. Mother gave a happy, tender look at this soul she was saving. The dining-room seemed full of sunshine, and the whole world light-hearted. But when Mother said it was nearly eight o'clock and the cab would soon be here, Father had demanded what cab. He listened to her answer in horror, and sprang up with a roar.

It was as though an elephant which had been tied up with infinite pains had trumpeted and burst every fetter, after the labor of months. It was all to do over again. Father not only had to be convinced that a day had been set, and that this

was the day, but the whole question of baptism had to be reopened and proved. All the religious instruction that had been slowly inscribed on his mind had apparently utterly vanished—the slate was wiped clean. He was back at his original starting-point, that this thing was all folderol—it was nothing but a wild idea of Mother's with which he had no concern.

A woman of less determination would have given up, Father was so indignant. But Mother, though frightened and discouraged and tearful, was angry. She wasn't going to let Father off, after all she had done. At first I thought she surely had lost. He was completely intractable. She stood up to him, armed with God's word and the laws of the church, and also, as she despairingly reminded him, with his own "Sacred Promise," and again she learned that not a one of them was any good. But she had one other weapon: Ryerson & Brown's waiting cab.

There were some things that were unheard of in our family: they simply weren't done. One was wasting money on cabs. When we went to the length of ordering a cab, we did not keep it wait-

ing. And the sight of this cab at the door seemed to hypnotize Father. It stood there like a link in some inevitable chain of events. At first he declared it could go to the devil, he didn't care if there were fifty cabs waiting. But he was by habit and instinct a methodical man. When he helped himself to a portion of anything at the table, for instance, he did his best to finish that portion, whether he liked it or not. He got all the more angry if it didn't taste right, but his code made him eat it. If he began a book he was bound to go on with it, no matter how much it bored him. He went through with any and every program to which he once felt committed. The fact that this cab had been ordered, and now stood at the door, prevailed in those depths of his spirit which God couldn't reach. Where I sat on the steps I could hear him upstairs in his room, banging doors and putting on his overcoat and cursing at fate.

Mother darted out and told the coachman where he was to take us; and then she got in, bonneted and cloaked, to wait for Father to come. The coachman looked puzzled when he found we were going to church. He could see we weren't dressed

for a funeral, yet it was hardly a wedding. Perhaps he thought we were a very devout family, seeking for some extra worship.

Then Father came down the steps, blackly. He got in the cab. And the horse and the coachman both jumped as Father slammed the door shut.

The cab bumped along over the cobblestones, with its ironshod wheels. The steady-going rattle and jolting made me dreamy. It was soothing to see the landscape slide by, at five or six miles an hour. Milkmen, ladling milk out of tall cans. Chambermaids polishing door-bells. Ladies, with the tops of their sleeves built up high at each shoulder. Horses straining at street-cars. Flocks of sparrows hopping about, pecking at refuse and dung, and waiting until a horse almost stepped on them before flying off.

We drove up Madison Avenue to the Park, and out at West Seventy-second Street. Then under the Elevated, with its coal-dust sifting down and stray cinders, blackening the pools in the street; and its little locomotives chuff-chuffing along overhead. At the Boulevard, as upper Broadway was then named, we turned northward. Over toward

the river were rocky wastelands, old shanties and goats. The skyline along the Boulevard was one of telegraph poles, along bare blocks and rail fences. I liked the looks of this ungraded district; it was all up-and-down and had ponds in it. And it ought to have comforted Father. No members of the club or the stock exchange could be sighted for miles; they probably never set foot in such regions. What more could Father ask?

But Father was glaring about, looking like a caged lion. Apparently he had confidently believed up to this very moment that Heaven would intervene somehow, and spare him this dose. He had never done Heaven any harm; why should it be malignant? His disappointment was increasingly bitter as he saw he was trapped. Another sort of man would have opened the cab door and bolted. But Father was drinking his hemlock. He also was freely expressing his feelings about it. The hardships of marriage had never before impressed him so sharply. A woman's demands on her husband were simply beyond human reckoning. He felt, and he said plainly to Mother, as the cab rattled on, that if he did this thing for her, it

must be understood that it was his supreme contribution. No diamond necklace. No other sacrifices of any kind. He must never be asked to do anything more all his life.

Mother tried to point out that he wasn't doing it for her but for God, but Father said: "Pshaw! I won't hear to it." He had never had any trouble with God till Mother appeared on the scene.

Mother quoted Dr. Garden again to him, but  
 . Father said "Pish!"

"Oh Clare, you mustn't," said Mother.

"Bah!" Father roared. "Bah! What do you suppose I care for that fellow!"

"But it's in the Bible."

"Pooh! Damn!"

Mother shuddered at this. Here was a man who defied even the Bible. She half-expected God to come bursting right out of the sky, and bang his fist down on the Ryerson & Brown cab and all in it.

"Damnation!" Father repeated, consumed by his wrongs.

Mother said, oh how could he talk so, on his way to the font! She drew away from him, and then looked back with awe at this being, whose

sense of his powers was so great that he would stand up to Anyone.

We had now come in sight of the church. It stood halfway up a steep hill, which the horse climbed at a walk, although Father said if the cab didn't hurry he wouldn't have time to be baptized—he'd be late at the office.

"What is the name of this confounded place?" he said, as we got out, making a jab at the little House of God with his cane.

"O Clare dear! Please don't. It's the Church of the Epiphany, I told you."

"Epiphany! Humph," Father grunted. "More gibberish."

Inside it was cold and bare, and it smelled of varnish. The pews were of new yellow pine, and the stained-glass looked cheap. There was nobody present. The sexton had hurried away to fetch the minister, after letting us in.

Father glowered around like a bull in some Plaza del Toro, waiting to charge the reverend toreador and trample upon him. He stood there, boxed up in surroundings where he didn't belong, hurt and outraged and lonely. His whole private

life had been pried into, even his babyhood. He had kept decently aloof from the depths of religion, as a gentleman should—he was no emotional tinker like that fellow, John Bunyan—yet here he was, dragged into this damned evangelist orgy, far from his own proper world, in the hands of his wife and a parson.

A footstep was heard.

“Oh, good morning, Mr. Morley,” said Mother.

“This is Mr. Day.”

Mr. Morley was a young man, shy but friendly, with a new-looking beard. He approached our little group trustingly, to shake Father’s hand, but he got such a look that he turned to me instead and patted me on the head several times. There was a rich smell of something about him. It wasn’t bayrum, such as Father sometimes used after shaving. It was far more delicious to me than any cologne or sachet scent. And besides, it had much more body to it; more satisfaction. But I couldn’t identify it. I only knew that it was a magnificent fragrance, and seemed to come from his beard. He led us up to the front of the church and the service began.

It says in the prayer-book that when a person of riper years is to be baptized, he shall be exhorted to prepare himself, with prayers and with fasting. And if he shall be found fit, "then the Godfathers and Godmothers (the People being assembled upon the Sunday or Prayer Day appointed) shall be ready to present him at the font." I suppose that was why I was taken along, so that there would be enough people there for a congregation: Mother and the sexton and me. The sexton, who seemed a nervous man, was skulking in a rear pew; but Mother and I stood just behind Father, to bolster him up. It was a curious situation for a small boy to be in, as I look back on it.

Mr. Morley presently read an address to the three of us, as we stood there before him. (I condense this and the following quotations, from the service in my old prayer-book.) "Dearly beloved," he said to us, "forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin, and they who are in the flesh cannot please God, but live in sin; and our Saviour Christ saith, none can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be regenerate and born anew; I beseech you to call upon God that

of his bounteous goodness he will grant to this person that which by nature he cannot have; that he may be baptized with Water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ's holy Church, and be made a lively member of the same."

Next came a prayer in which Mr. Morley went back to the ark, and spoke of how God saved Noah and his family from perishing by water; and of how God also led the children of Israel safely through the Red Sea; and of how Jesus was baptized in the Jordan. These three incidents were cited as proof that God had sanctified "the element of Water to the mystical washing away of sin."

"We beseech thee," Mr. Morley continued, "that thou wilt mercifully look upon this thy Servant; wash him and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost; that he, being delivered from thy wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ's Church; and being steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, may come to the land of everlasting life."

Father was getting restive by this time, but Mr. Morley kept on. He read us a part of the Gospel

of John, and a long exhortation and prayer; and after this he bravely turned and spoke as follows to Father:

“Well-beloved, who are come hither desiring to receive holy Baptism, you have heard how the congregation hath prayed that our Lord Jesus Christ would release you of your sins, to give you the kingdom of Heaven, and everlasting life. You have heard also that our Lord hath promised to grant all those things that we have prayed for. Wherefore you must also faithfully, in the presence of these your Witnesses and this whole congregation, promise and answer to the following questions:

“Dost thou renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh?”

The answer to this was rather long, and Father of course had not learned it; but Mother whispered the words in his ear, and he repeated some of them impatiently, in a harsh, stony voice. He looked as though he might have been an annoyed Roman general, participating much against his

will in a low and barbaric rite.

There were only three more questions, however, and the answers were short.

"O Merciful God," said Mr. Morley, when these were finished, "grant that the old Adam in this person may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in him. Amen." He had to say this, because it was in the prayer-book; but Father's eyes were on fire, and there was a great deal of the old Adam in him, and it didn't look buried.

Four more little prayers followed, and then came the great moment, when Mr. Morley tried to pour water on Father. Owing to Father's being no longer an infant, the prayer-book didn't require Mr. Morley to take him into his arms for this purpose, and hold him over the font; but he did have to wet him a little. I don't know how he managed it. I remember how Father stood, grim and erect, in his tailed morning-coat; but when I saw Mr. Morley make a pass at Father's forehead, I am sorry to say I shut my eyes tightly at this frightful sacrilege, and whether he actually landed or not I never knew. But he did

go on to say, "I baptize thee," and all the rest of it, to Father. "We receive this person into the congregation of Christ's flock," he added; "and do sign him with the sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end. Amen."

The baptism part was now over. Father started to leave, but we managed somehow to detain him while we knelt and gave thanks. And, to end with, Mr. Morley urged Father to "mortify all his evil affections," and exhorted Mother and me to remember that it was our part and duty to put Father in mind what a solemn vow he had now made, that so he might grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, "and live godly, righteously, and soberly, in this present world."

We stood awkwardly still for a moment, but there was nothing else. Mr. Morley started in being chatty, in a more everyday voice. He stood next to me as he talked, and I remember how absorbed I was, again, by his mellow aroma. The

odor was so grateful to my senses that it seemed almost nourishing. I sniffed and I sniffed—till all of a sudden I knew what it was. It was cocoa. We seldom had cocoa at our house. It made me feel hungry. I greedily inhaled the last bits of it while Mr. Morley talked on. He said he hoped we'd attend services in this new church of his, sometimes. He began to describe how the bishop had come there to consecrate it.

But Father broke in, saying abruptly, "I shall be late at the office," and strode down the aisle. Mother and I hurried after him. He was muttering such blasphemous things that I heard Mother whisper: "Oh, please, Clare, please; please don't. This poor little church! It'll have to be consecrated all over again."

As we drove off, Mother sank back into her corner of the cab, quite worn out. Father was still seething away, as though his very soul was boiling over. If he could only have known it, long quiet days were ahead, when he and God could go back in peace to their comfortable old ways together; for he was never confirmed, or troubled in any way again by religious demands. But all

he could think of, for the moment, were his recent indignities.

He got out at the nearest Elevated station, to take a train for the office, with the air of a man who had thoroughly wasted the morning. He slammed the cab door on us, leaving us to drive home alone. But before he turned away to climb the stairs, he thrust his red face in the window, and with a burning look at Mother said, "I hope to God you are satisfied." Then this new son of the church took out his watch, gave a start, and Mother and I heard him shout "Hell!" as he raced up the steps.

## GIAMBATTISTA BODONI 1740-1813

*Two years after William Caslon died Bodoni established his press in Parma under the patronage of the Duke of Parma. His first specimen book appeared in 1771. In 1818 his widow completed his Manuale Tipographico. There were two periods in Bodoni's career; first he used Old Style or transitional type plentifully decorated; later he employed types designed by himself and depended for his effects upon pure typography without ornament of any kind. He gradually developed the "grand manner," producing large volumes in the most sumptuous style with extravagant margins. His types were rather too rigidly perfect in detail, his later designs still further contrasting the thick with the thin wiry lines, and it was without doubt this feature that gave birth to William Morris's strong condemnation when he called the Bodoni types "swelteringly hideous." Even today certain typographic experts say they are "bad." But Bodoni's types are neither hideous nor bad, and the modern version, designed not as a reproduction of any one of Bodoni's fonts but being based upon a composite conception of the Bodoni manner, is a type which, if used with care, can produce results at once pleasing and effective.*



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